



STUDY BUDDY

Biscuit



Based on the books by Alyssa Satin Capucilli
with illustrations by Pat Schories

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ArtsPower National Touring Theatre

Gary W. Blackman
Mark A. Blackman

Executive Producers

Biscuit

Based on the "Biscuit" series of books
by Alyssa Satin Capucilli and
illustrated by Pat Schories
Published by HarperCollins ©1996

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Script by Greg Gunning
Music by Richard DeRosa
Lyrics By Greg Gunning

Costume Design and Construction by
Fred Sorrentino

Set Illustrations by
Dan Helzer/Blitz Designs

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STUDY BUDDY



TEACHER INFORMATION

This study guide is designed to help you and your students prepare for, enjoy, and discuss ArtsPower's musical play, **Biscuit**, before and after the performance. You may reproduce and distribute this Study Buddy to your students. **Please read this page about ArtsPower's musical to your students before attending the performance.** The main characters appear in boldface type.

WHAT HAPPENS IN BISCUIT?

Biscuit is a musical based on a number of the "Biscuit" series of books by author Alyssa Satin Capucilli and illustrator Pat Schories. The first book in the series, titled "Biscuit," was published by HarperCollins in 1996. Since then, 51 "Biscuit" books have been published.

Biscuit arrives at the home of **Little Girl** as a surprise birthday present. Little Girl is thrilled to discover Biscuit and his dog house awaiting her at her birthday celebration. In addition to the dog house, Little Girl also receives a box of biscuits and a book entitled, "How to Educate Your Puppy." She is determined that Biscuit will be the best puppy in the world.

Little Girl wants Biscuit to pass the "Best Puppy" test that appears at the end of the book. Biscuit is an eager student and tries very hard to acquire as many skills as he can. But, for the rambunctious little puppy, learning takes time. Along his journey, Biscuit also learns to be a friend.

Biscuit's friends, **Sam the Dog** and **Daisy the Cat**, do their best to help him learn. They even sneak him into Little Girl's school without her knowing. Biscuit's exciting adventures there certainly help him gain new knowledge.





After school, Biscuit learns that Little Girl's family will soon have a new baby. With all the excitement and commotion surrounding the new arrival, Biscuit begins to feel a bit neglected.

Through Little Girl's experiences, she realizes that tests are not as important as being a good, sharing person. Will her new-found knowledge affect Biscuit and his work to become the best puppy in the world?



HOW TO BE A GOOD AUDIENCE MEMBER

In order to be a good audience member, remember to:

-  Listen quietly.
-  Pay attention to the things the actors say and do – some things might make you happy, and some might be funny. Feel free to laugh at things you think are funny!
-  Sit quietly and do not talk during the performance, unless you are requested to do so by the actors onstage.
-  If you enjoy the play, you can applaud after musical numbers and at the end.

To purchase any of the BISCUIT books on Amazon, click **here**.

(https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_2?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=alyssa+satin+capucilli&rh=i%3Aaps%2Ck%3Aalyssa+satin+capucilli)



ArtsPower STUDY BUDDY



ARTSPower NATIONAL TOURING THEATRE

Please read this page to your students before attending the performance.

ArtsPower is a theatre company that creates musical and dramatic theatre productions based on books for young readers and tours them for young and family audiences throughout the nation.

The four actors and one stage manager:

- present performances in regional theatres, cultural centers, university auditoriums, and schools all over the United States.
- pack the set, costumes, and sound equipment in their van.
- set up and break down the show.
- take care of costumes and props – (objects that are handled by the actors).
- stay in hotels when they travel.
- sometimes present up to 9 performances in a week.



LEARNING ACTIVITY

Why is ArtsPower called a national touring theatre?

If you were an actor, do you think you would like to travel to different places to perform?

Do you think audiences from different parts of the country respond to the performance in the same or in different ways? If so, why?

WHAT IS A MUSICAL?

A **musical** is a story told through spoken words and songs by live actors onstage. The spoken words are called **lines**. The words that are sung are called **lyrics**. The music that was composed just for this show is called the show's **soundtrack**. For this performance, the soundtrack has been recorded onto an iPad which is operated by the stage manager.

The musical **Biscuit** features four professional actors who play some of the characters found in the "Biscuit" books. The actors wear **costumes** and perform in front of their **set**.

Because reading a book is different than seeing a live performance on stage, the **playwright**, or the person who writes the lines that the actors speak, must change parts of the story or bring new qualities to the characters that are not found in the book. In other words, the playwright **adapts** the book into a musical play, or changes parts of it to turn the words on the page into a live performance.

THE MUSIC FOR BISCUIT

Composer Richard DeRosa (bio on Page 4) wrote and arranged the music for *Biscuit*. Richard used electronic keyboards and synthesized music – sounds generated by a special computer – to record the soundtrack. During the performance, the actors sing live to the prerecorded soundtrack.



STUDY BUDDY



CREATING THEATRE

Please **READ THIS SECTION** to your students before attending the performance.

Creating a musical theatre production like *Biscuit* takes a lot of time and creative energy from a group of people. Many people work together to make the changes and additions it takes to turn the book into an hour-long musical.

- The **playwright** writes lines that the actors speak.
- The **composer** writes the music.
- The **lyricist** writes the words to the songs that the actors sing.
- The **actors** perform the show.
- The **designers** create sets, costumes, and lighting.
- The **stage manager** oversees all backstage elements of a show.
- The **director** rehearses the actors and makes decisions about what happens on stage during the show.
- The **producers** raise the money to create and manage all aspects of the production and its tour throughout the U.S. and Canada.

THE CREATIVE TEAM FOR BISCUIT



GREG GUNNING (Playwright, Lyricist, and Director) is ArtsPower's Artistic Director and has written or co-written the scripts to all of ArtsPower's theatre productions. Greg's script for ArtsPower's *Lily's Crossing*, based on the Newbery Honor book by Patricia Reilly Giff, is included in Penguin Books' "The Signet Book of Short Plays."



RICHARD DEROSA (Composer and Orchestrator) is presently Associate Professor and Director of Jazz Composition and Arranging Studies at the University of North Texas. Richard has composed and orchestrated the scores to all but three ArtsPower productions. jazz.unt.edu/derosa



ALYSSA SATIN CAPUCILLI (Author) was born in Brooklyn, NY and graduated from Sarah Lawrence College. She has been honored with numerous writing awards including the American Literacy Council Award, the Bank Street College Best Book Award, Children's Choice Award, and American Library Association Award. Alyssa lives in Hastings-on-Hudson, NY with her husband and children. They have a chocolate Labrador retriever named Huckleberry. www.alyssacapucilli.com



GARY (above) and MARK BLACKMAN (Producers & ArtsPower's Founding Co-Directors) founded ArtsPower in 1985. The Blackmans are graduates of Columbia College, Columbia University and Florida State University's College of Music. In their former lives as musicians, each was named as an "Outstanding Jazz Soloist" in *Downbeat* magazine's Student Recording Awards. In their present lives, Gary serves as ArtsPower's Managing Director while Mark is Director of Development and Marketing. Gary has served as a board member on the New Jersey State Council on the Arts since 2014.



STUDY BUDDY



LINES, LYRICS & MUSIC

Please read this page to your students before attending the performance.

Because *Biscuit* is a musical, the story is told through spoken words and songs. Spoken words are called **lines**. The musical's lines tell the audience about the characters and the story. Words that are sung as part of a song are called **lyrics**. Actors work with the director to speak or "deliver" their lines and lyrics with expression.

ACTORS' LINES

The words spoken or "delivered" by the actors are written by the playwright. Each actor must memorize the script or "lines" for his or her own character. They must also be familiar with the lines of the other characters, too.

Here is what the first page of the *Biscuit* script looks like:

(Music underscores.)
(Biscuit is sleeping in his doghouse.)
(The Little Girl turns to the audience.)

LITTLE GIRL

(as narrator to the audience)

Welcome to my backyard. My name is... (thinks)... well, my parents always just call me their 'little girl', so I guess you could call me that too.

(crosses center)

... I'm here to tell you ... (thinks/remembers) ... Well,... in fact,...

(Gestures to the two assistants who are sitting upstage. They are dressed similarly to the Little Girl as young friends of hers.)

... We're all here to tell you about my sweet little puppy - in fact, the best puppy in the whole wide world. Yep, that's Biscuit. He's just sort of ... well ... everything that you might think about when you think about love!

LEARNING ACTIVITY



To learn more about Biscuit's character, read his lines below. Imagine you are playing the part of Biscuit and deliver each line aloud with expression.

"Boy, I didn't know there would be so much to learn."

"This is it! I'll fetch, run, dig, speak! ... Show her I can do it all. Yeah!"

"Hey,... hey, wait a minute, Sam - Daisy! I've got an idea!"

LYRICS

There is no musical without music and lyrics. Greg Gunning wrote the lyrics to all the songs in *Biscuit*. What do these lyrics that Little Girl sings tell you about what she needs to do with Biscuit?

**THERE'S SO MUCH TO KNOW.
'DIG', 'STAY', 'FETCH'.
HE'LL HAVE TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW
EV'RYDAY.**





STUDY BUDDY



ALL ABOUT BISCUIT

ArtsPower's Biscuit is a musical theatre production that was created using the following 12 "Biscuit" books by author Alyssa Satin Capucilli and illustrator Pat Schories: "Biscuit;" "Meet Biscuit;" "Biscuit and the Baby;" "Biscuit Wins a Prize;" "Biscuit Goes to School;" "Biscuit's Show and Share Day;" "Mind Your Manners;" "Biscuit's Big Friend;" "Biscuit's Birthday;" "Time to Paint, Biscuit;" "Biscuit's New Trick;" and "Biscuit Goes to the Fair."

Lets talk about *Biscuit* the musical.

(Discuss the following **before** the performance): Why do you think the playwright used 12 "Biscuit" books to tell this story? What do you know about Biscuit? Do you like Biscuit? Do you have a dog at home? Can you imagine a play about your dog?

(Discuss the following **after** the performance): Did you enjoy the performance? Why or why not? How did you know that Little Girl loved Biscuit? Did she do a good job training Biscuit? Did Biscuit do the right thing in going to school to try to learn? Did you feel sorry for Biscuit when a new baby arrived at his house? Why or why not? What did Biscuit do when his friends needed help? Would you like to have a puppy like Biscuit? If you had a puppy, how would you treat it?

LEARNING ACTIVITY



Before the performance, read the book simply titled "Biscuit." This is the very first "Biscuit" book inspired by author Alyssa Satin Capucilli's daughter, Laura, who loved to dog-sit the neighbor's golden retriever. Identify the parts of the book that were included in ArtsPower's musical. If you have any of the other books listed in the paragraph at the top of this page, read them and discuss what parts of those books the playwright included.

THE BISCUIT SET

The **set designer** builds a small model of the set (some of the pieces are included below) so he can determine how the individual pieces will look and where they should be placed on stage. The model is made from foam core board with each piece being approximately 4 to 6 inches high. Most of the set pieces are built to be 6 to 8 feet high. The entire set is portable and travels in a large van with the actors and stage manager.





STUDY BUDDY



LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!

After you see **Biscuit**, use the space below to write to us OR send us a picture showing your favorite part of the performance. Please send them to **ArtsPower, 9 Sand Park Road, Suite 6, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009**. You may also visit us online at <http://www.artspower.org> and click on "Contact Us." Thanks!

Your School _____

School's City and State _____

Date _____

Dear ArtsPower,

I saw **Biscuit** at: _____

Here's what I enjoyed about the performance: _____

Here's why: _____

Here's what I would change about the performance: _____

Here's why: _____

From,

Your Name _____